

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

**DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln**

---

Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership

Educational Administration, Department of

---

9-26-2018

# Recruiting Community College Transfer Students

Jody Reding

Lubbock Christian University, [Jody.Reding@lcu.edu](mailto:Jody.Reding@lcu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ciel>

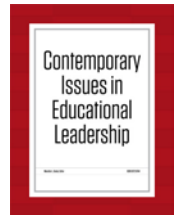


Part of the [Community College Education Administration Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

---

Reding, Jody, "Recruiting Community College Transfer Students" (2018). *Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership*. 6.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ciel/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Administration, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



# Recruiting Community College Transfer Students

Jody Reding

Lubbock Christian University

Private faith-based colleges and universities are a strong fit for community college transfer students. However, far too many small private faith-based colleges and universities miss the mark when it comes to their successful recruitment. This paper seeks to address this issue and provide solutions for successfully recruiting community college transfer students.

The number one question that leads decisions year in and year out for many small private faith-based colleges and universities is whether or not they can recruit and retain students (M. Brewer, personal communication, 2015). All too often, the focus of most admissions teams' centers on traditional (new freshman) undergraduates. In fact, new freshman account for nearly 75% of enrollment at most institutions (Wick, 2015). Interestingly, 92% of private four-year colleges and universities indicate they target transfers to meet enrollment goals, yet, only 9% feel they are effective (Longenecker, 2016).

## *Shifting landscape*

The landscape of higher education is changing. Shifting demographics, an inconsistent economy, and increased skepticism have led many to question whether higher education is worth the price. Many students and families have reconsidered their higher education path. "Students are consuming postsecondary education in smaller chunks today...they are increasingly starting at a community college whether that's to save money, stay closer to home, or be able to work and care for families" (Doug Shapiro as quoted by Douglas-Gabriel, 2016).

### *About Community Colleges*

Accessible, flexible and affordable, community colleges seek to meet the diverse needs of both the student and the community by offering academic transfer, technical education, continuing education, workforce development, and community service programs. Community colleges serve as the entry point for 42 percent of U.S. undergraduates (CCRC, 2015). Nearly *half* (49%) of all students who completed a degree at a four-year institution in 2015-2016 attended a two-year institution at some point in the previous 10 years (CCRC, 2016). Offering open-access, low tuition and geographic proximity to home, community colleges serve as a critical and vitally important starting point for many people.

### *About transfer students*

Community colleges attract a wide array of students including, dual credit, first generation, minority, low-income, adults and retirees (Monroe, 2014). Many of these students choose a community college for the accessibility (open admission), affordability (low tuition), and flexibility (proximity to home) (The College Board, 2016). Open admission affords students, *of all levels of preparedness*, the opportunity to learn, earn a certificate or degree, prepare for transfer, or hone technical skills and enter the workforce (CCRC, 2015). A recent survey revealed: (a) 93% of transfer students reported a strong commitment to finishing college, (b) 90% reported the decision to go to college was the “right one,” and (c) 80% indicated the college experience is “very rewarding” for them personally (Noel-Levitz, 2013, p. 4). In spite of the positive attitudes referenced in the survey, only 33% of community college students transfer to four-year institutions within six years (Jenkins and Fink, 2016).

### *About Private nonprofit colleges and universities*

There are 1,682 four-year degree granting, private nonprofit colleges and universities in the United States. Each institution operates independently serving the mission, vision, and values defined by the founders and current leadership (NAICU, 2016). Private faith-based colleges and universities make up the largest percent of the independent non-profit sector. Average enrollment at private faith based colleges and universities is 2,300 (NAICU, 2016). Private universities and colleges do not receive the same state funding afforded to public universities. Enrollment size and lack of state funding, all too often, equate to lean budgets, leaving little room for budget error (NAICU, 2016,

Zumeta, Breneman, Callan, and Finney, 2012). Successfully recruiting and retaining students becomes a top priority.

Surprising and unbeknown to most, private faith-based colleges and universities are a strong fit for community college transfer students. Diverse and affordable they offer a time-to-degree advantage commonly set in environments that are warm, welcoming and personal (NAICU, 2016). Successful recruitment of this ever growing population of student, requires sharing information that is relevant, but most importantly, it requires connecting that information from the head to the heart.

### ***Solution #1***

#### ***Share information that's relevant to community college transfers***

Surprising to most, private faith based colleges and universities are *diverse*. Approximately 1/3 of students enrolled are minority. In fact, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities indicated enrollment of minority students at private colleges and universities has outpaced “total enrollment growth” over the last decade, “reflecting the racial diversity of the nation itself” (NAICU, 2016).

Surprising to most, private faith based colleges and universities are *affordable*. 89% of students attending private colleges and universities receive institutional aid in addition to federal aid (NAICU, 2016). Through institutional grants and scholarships, students end up paying considerably less than the “sticker price” (NAICU, 2016, p. 6). According to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, those “demonstrating the greatest need,” pay, on average, 30% of the advertised tuition (NAICU, 2016, p. 6).

Unbeknown to most, private colleges and universities have a time-to-degree advantage (NAICU, 2016). Nearly 80% of private college students earn their degree within 4 years, compared to 60% at four-year state institutions (NAICU, 2016). Studies show students of “all ethnic groups,” and those who are the first in their family to go to college, that are attending private colleges and universities are “far more likely” to complete their degrees within four years than those attending public institutions (NAICU, 2016, p. 10). Completing a degree in four years equates to significant savings and faster entry into the workforce. According to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, private college students save, on average, more than \$25,000 by graduating in four years (NAICU, 2016).

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education (2009) found students with multiple “risk factors” are more likely to succeed at private colleges and universities. Several key factors play a role in this success. In a longitudinal study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute, students attending private colleges and universities reported developing: (a) the ability to think critically, (b) problem-solving skills, (c) interpersonal skills, (d) writing skills, (e) an understanding of social problems facing our nation, (f) leadership skills, and (g) public speaking skills (NAICU, 2016).

### ***Solution #2***

#### ***“Do what others can’t and won’t”***

Unbeknown to most, private faith based colleges and universities offer highly personal experiences. With total enrollment averaging 2,300, students benefit from low student-to-faculty ratio, more individualized attention and report a “higher level of satisfaction with their college experience” (NAICU, 2016, p. 12). For many professors at private faith-based colleges and universities, it is their love of teaching that creates separation. Consider the words of Lubbock Christian University professor of history, Dr. Gregg Fehr, “I enjoy teaching for the same reason that I enjoy gardening; I like to witness growth. And, if I can make some contribution to that growth, so much the better. With its emphasis on small class size and the mentoring of students, Lubbock Christian University daily affords me that opportunity.” Whitworth University professor, Dr. Kamesh Sankaran, shares a similar sentiment, “I know my students really well – what’s going on in their lives, their backgrounds, their hopes and fears. That helps me be a better teacher, and I can’t think of anything better to do with my life” (NAICU, 2016, p. 12). While campus community size certainly plays a role in the personal experience, it is the servant-led philosophy of private faith based university and college employees that makes the difference. “Doing what others can’t or won’t, or, what they are unable or unwilling to do, is what sets us apart” (M. Brewer, personal communication, 2016). When every employee goes out of his or her way to invests in the student experience, “we create an environment that is unmatched” (M. Brewer, personal communication, 2017).

### ***Solution #3***

#### ***Connect the information from the head to the heart through relationship***

Recruiting is above all else relational. Successful recruitment of community college transfer students depends on one's willingness to build and sustain relationships. It is the quality of the relationship that can turn the enrollment tide.

The single most important factor in building and sustaining relationships with community college transfer students is honesty. Extensive research (conducted over 40 years) asked people what they most look for in someone whose direction they would willingly follow (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). Findings revealed, over 100,000 people from different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and age groups agreed; for someone to willingly follow another person, they must be honest. Community college transfer students need reliable information. They need to know what classes will transfer, how long it will take for them to complete their degree, and what grants and scholarships they qualify for. Many of these students are helping support their families. Time-to-degree is critical. Knowing they are working with someone who is trustworthy, consistent and reliable is essential to their success and their commitment to attend.

The second most important factor in building and sustaining relationships with community college transfer students is being forward-looking (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). People who attend community colleges come from various walks of life and are at various stages of life. Many are the first in their families to go to college. Articulating the message in such a way that paints a picture of what *could be* helps these students imagine a desirable destination (Kouzes and Posner, 2007). Describing what it will look like, feel like, and be like, helps community college transfer students believe it is possible.

The third most important factor in building and sustaining relationships with community college transfer students is inspiring hope. Far too often recruiters "share information." Successful recruiting, however, requires connecting the information being shared with the heart. A recruiter must be enthusiastic, energetic, and positive. Community college transfer students are more willing to get behind the information being presented, if the recruiter "breathes life into their dreams and aspirations" (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 34).

The fourth most important factor in building in sustaining relationships with community college transfer students is competence. Many community college transfer students are the first in their family to go to college. They do not know what questions they need to be asking. They must believe the recruiter is competent in guiding them. If the recruiter is unreliable, inconsistent, lacks knowledge

and follow-up, odds are the student will not apply. As the old saying goes: “If you don’t believe in the messenger, you won’t believe the message” (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 38).

## Conclusion

The number one question that leads decisions year in and year out for many small private-faith based colleges and universities is whether or not they can recruit and retain students. For many institutions the focus centers on the recruitment of traditional undergraduates. An ever-growing population that tends to get overlooked is the community college transfer student. Small private faith-based colleges and universities are a strong fit for community college transfers. Successfully recruiting this student requires more than simply sharing information. It requires a recruiter that is honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. It requires a recruiter who can connect the information from the head to the heart.

## References

- CCRC. (2016). Tracking Transfers: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor’s Degrees. Retrieved from <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.html>
- CCRC. (2015). *What we know about transfers*. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/what-we-know-about-transfer.pdf>
- Douglas-Gabriel, D. (2016, June 28). Community College Students are filling the rolls at four-year institutions. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/06/28/community-college-students-are-filling-the-rolls-at-the-four-year-institutions/>
- Fain, P. (2012). Graduate, transfer, graduate. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/11/08/high-graduation-rates-community-college-transfers>
- Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B.Z. (2007). *The Leadership Challenge* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (XIV). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Longenecker, F. (2016). *Best student segments to target for recruitment, as rated by campus officials in a recent poll*. Retrieved from <http://blogem.ruffalonl.com/category/recruitment/page/2/>
- Monroe, A. (2014). *Top strategies for college transfer student recruitment*. Retrieved from <http://blogem.ruffalonl.com/category/recruitment/page/7/>

- NAICU. (2016). *Data and Research*. Retrieved from [https://www.naicu.edu/data\\_research/default.asp](https://www.naicu.edu/data_research/default.asp)
- Noel-Levitz. (2013). *The attitudes and motivations of college transfer students*. Retrieved from [https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/gated/Papers\\_and\\_Research/2013/2013TransferStudentAttitudesReport.pdf?code=4745727201683](https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/gated/Papers_and_Research/2013/2013TransferStudentAttitudesReport.pdf?code=4745727201683)
- The College Board. (2016). *Community College FAQs*. Retrieved from <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/how-to-find-your-college-fit/community-college-faqs>
- Wick, J. (2015). *Firing on all cylinders for college transfer student recruitment and retention*. Retrieved from <http://blogem.ruffalonl.com/2015/04/20/firing-cylinders-college-transfer-student-recruitment-retention/>
- Zumeta, W., Breneman, D.W., Callan, P.M., and Finney, J.E. (2012). *Financing American Higher Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.